(a) whether it is a fact that modern emigration facilities are lacking in the emigration offices in the country causing difficulties to the people at large;

(b) if so, whether Government has any proposal to introduce e-emigration to make the clearance process faster and easier;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) In view of the growing number of Indian citizens emigrating overseas for employment and to make the emigration process simple, efficient and transparent, steps have been taken to introduce e-governance in emigration and to modernise the offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs). As a part of the e-governance project, all the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs) at Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Cochin and Chennai have already been computerized. To ensure comprehensive e-emigration, the e-governance project envisages connecting all stakehlders in the same electronic platform.

Shipyard workers in USA

2722. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently hundreds of shipyard workers who went from India to a small town in Gulf of Mexico in USA have been protesting against in-human conditions and wage cuts at employers camp;

(b) if so, the kind of help that has been provided to these hapless workers who were lured to work in Catarina hit areas; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) As per the reports received from the Indian Missions in USA, 590 Indian workers were recruited with M/s Signal International, a marine fabrication company, in Mississippi and Texas. They had gone to US on H2B Visas (Guest workers Visa Programme) valid initially for 10 months, extendable at the discretion of the employer and the US authorities. Workers were aggrieved on account of alleged poor accommodation and amenities, deductions from their salary for accommodation, food, electricity, water and alleged non-fulfilment of initial commitment of permanent residency status etc. On 6th March, 2008, the Indian workers demonstrated outside the office of their employer voicing their demands. They also met Indian Ambassador on 27.3.2008 and pressed for the said demands.

(b) and (c) The Indian Mission in USA has approached the US Government to conduct a detailed investigation into the matter and take remedial measures. The Indian Mission has also taken steps to withhold visas from the main US recruiters involved to prevent them from entering India to resume their recruiting operations.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has suspended the license of M/s Dewan Consultants and M/s S. Mansur & Co., Mumbai, blacklisted the foreign employer and is also initiating legal action against the Recruiting Agent for violation of Emigration Act, 1983.